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## PHENOMENOLOGIC CHIPPENDALE CHAIR: STEPHEN'S NIGHTMARE

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**Keywords:** “natürliche Einstellung”, “langagière du langage”, James Joyce, Phenomenology, Husserl, Stephen Dedalus, Ricoeur, intentionality, history

**ABSTRACT.** James Joyce's hermeneutics of narrative, Husserlian scholars, fictitious theory of history by Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, interpretation in both terms of modes and meaning, exploration of the implication of passive intentionality, an ‘anonymity’ seeking for its ontological root, a stoppage on the notion of “*as if of*”, ‘noema’ and ‘noesis’ in their technical use, “*natürliche Einstellung*” and a handful of other issues are all cited here by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and others just to shed more light on findings, insights, observations and conclusions in social and cognitive sciences, by the help of a static and genetic analysis of some key notions like ‘intentionality and consciousness’ from both historical and systematic perspectives, ranging from Dr. Johnson on Shakespeare to Husserl's guidelines in phenomenology.

“Je suis l'empire à la fin de la décadence,  
Qui regarde passer les grands Barbares blancs  
En composant des acrostiques indolents...”  
(*Paul Verlaine, Langueur*)

“... Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,  
Can also thus domesticate a fear...”  
(*Richard Wilbur, A Barred Owl*)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

If a prosodist manages to find his/her way out of the poets' adroit craftsmanship, enraptured upon learning that Verlaine could be translated into “I am the empire at the end of its decline/ Watching the great white barbarians pass/ While composing idle acrostics”, he will be soon trapped in the number of possibilities which might create any relationship between Wilbur and Verlaine. Do “acrostics” and “words” bypass the intonational, rhythmic overflow of the language, or on the phenomenological level, something else is happening? One might respond that, they are, well, all, both faces of the same coin. This paper seeks to shed more light on, a hermeneutical role, two words, two notions, two subjects, or two situations might cooperate, to prescribe meaning(s) out of a narrative as we read.

Dogmatism or liberalism of a father makes Harper Lee name her novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, which may make the reader ask himself whether it is just a Biblical allusion to Isaiah 21:6 “For thus hath the Lord said unto me, go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seethes”, as a Faulknerian tradition of the time, regarding titles, *Absalom, Absalom!* As an instant, or surpassing the acceptance of ‘allusion’, as a figure of speech, so that we ought to find out more about the way an allusion implies briefly, the residue of a lived-experience, in terms of representation or emplotment. Since the idea of title and allusion has been discussed numerously, it is tried here, to focus on the elements of narrative, choice of an author to write the lines in the form of a dialogue, rather than the simple format of the prose-‘objectification’ within the style which is stereotype to mostly all novelists up to now. To grasp a classical interpretation of a narrative in its dramatic sense, a reading of Dr. Johnson, might be helpful to clarify the atmosphere of that age, by entering the realm of

Shakespearean dramatic poetry, in brief, he may pave the way tracing back the sense of narrativity, and interpretation in the presence of our classics.

## 2. PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE<sup>1</sup>

Let's pay attention to "naturally", "tedious" and "frequent interruption", while Dr. Johnson evaluates Shakespeare,

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatick poetry is, *naturally tedious*, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by *frequent interruption*. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendor [emphasis mine] (Johnson Preface 3).

A good example of Shakespearean dramatic poetry can be found at the end of *Twelfth Night*,

The Clown sings.

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy;  
For the rain it raineth every day.  
But when I came to man's estate,

...

A great while ago the world begun,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day (Twelfth V.I).

Ages before 1969- in which the formal analysis of narratives was applied, Johnson talks of "disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution", rooted in ancient theories of storytelling, such as those of Aristotle's. Like narratology, which is a science of resting upon certain basic distinctions between, what is narrated and how it is narrated, Johnson's main concern is on "what". The "diction" and "circumlocution", serve the text to help the narrator, narrate his or her narration. What is presently at hand by Johnson is, to pursue investigations into the narrated *materials*, what the Russian folktale investigator, Vladimir Propp takes as, elementary units which are common to all narratives. Basic elements of 'functions' are proposed to be, no more than 31, so that the rule of thumb would be to separate them, always in the same order. Likewise, A. J. Greimas, the French narratologist, introduces only 6 'actants', or basic rules in stories: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent. What is shared by Johnson and this kind of folkloric analysis is that none of them does have an interest in the literary technique. Johnson's further step is sought to survey the effect of the material. The 'tediousness', due to the lack of activity and animation, which is resolved by sporadic hesitations and an effervescence, regarding the pace of the narration.

When it comes to the study of narration, or 'how' the story is told, the relationship to literary fiction, years later, is originated in a theory practiced by Henry James, which is then codified in terms of narrative "point of view", by P. Lubbock his disciple, in *Craft of Fiction* (1921); then, E.M Forster and E. Muir. The new distinctions, like the ones between the real author, and the 'implied author', reliable and unreliable narrators were introduced by W. C. Booth, prior to Gerard Genet's comprehensive analysis of various kinds of possible narrator and narrative order (Drabble Narratology).

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson's title

### 3. 'LANGUAGELY' MEANING OF LANGUAGE OR/AND SOMETHING 'ANONYME'

The more narratology is evolved, the less a narrator is trusted. The complexity of the narrative in a novel like *Ulysses* foregrounds the simplicity of how a message is sent to the reader. Complicated it seems, though. That Dublin is not the very place Stephen expects, that a chaos is present while everything seems to be in order, are perhaps merely initiative signals communicated in between. That Stephen slams the condition is not far from expectation. That he imagines a visit to aunt Sara's by which the reader is faced with the very "things", he has "married into" (38), as an instant, is not amusing enough for a reader who has started a chapter which is perhaps the best in its kind, opening: "ineluctable modality..." (37). While recreating the whole scene, Stephen is making a complaint. He is just mediating by the sea, though. He has not arrived there and won't. Walter and uncle Ritchie have a dialogue to be portraying their state of being the most hospitable of the hosts. The guest is full of negative presuppositions. The history of the extended family, the history itself, in general, as "a nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake" (34), leaves the "dreamydeary", reader, within the maze of another interpretation of history, minding him to be much more careful, "Heed! Heed! It may half been a missfired brick, as some say, or it mought have been due to a collupsus of his back promises, as others looked at it. (There extand by now one thousand and one stories, all told, of the same)" (Joyce *Finnegans* 5).

Yet, prior to catch up on a theory of history, we ought to, wonder if we are permitted to presuppose history, as a future phenomenon, considering different phases of imagination Stephen is experiencing, besides the elimination of the chronology experienced by the author, and the fact that there exists a possibility of authenticity of 'nothingness', from which we are setting off, to blame others for being impolite, too urbane and other pre-judgmental issues of this sort, while the conversation has no historical existence yet, outside Stephen's mind. It seems as if Stephen interprets history based on the future instead of the past, not simply as the times one tries to avoid doing something, because it has had numerous or even once in-a-life-time negative outcome, but as if he is teaching himself a lesson, exactly in the middle of the process of mediation, on the possibility of an experience, which has never indeed happened, a level beyond a mere negative phase of pessimistic prediction, like somewhere added to the linguistic plane of interpretation, where Stephen tries to, at least, linguistically speaking, avoid a destination he is fully aware of, while, again, nothing happened for the real, just his overflowing mediation, which is now fully apparent and authentic, to go on, like an expression which has been truly expressed, so to speak, he is coming to have an experience, only through the language itself, a meaningful state of recognition, merely by mediating the speech, as Merleau-Ponty considers it as a, sort of chance for the mediator, kind of inward opportunity for the speaker, to practice his experience not on the surface, but deeper and deeper, beneath the bottom of any traceable plane. "Il y a une signification « langagière » du langage qui accomplit la médiation entre mon intention encore muette et les mots, de telle sorte que mes paroles me surprennent moi-même et m'enseignent ma pensée" <sup>2</sup> (Merleau-Ponty *Signes* 88).

As the ego actually encounters with the world, converts it into a theme, as Husserl puts it, 'awakens'. Non-egologically, it fulfills the empty structure with something 'anonymous', though. "Toute perception a lieu dans une atmosphère de généralité et se donne à nous comme *anonyme*" <sup>3</sup> (Merleau-Ponty *Phénoménologie* 217). When *awakened* in pre-*Finnegans* mode, *at once*, it is a "nightmare" whereas it come to the hight of its awakening mode, it is "one thousand and one stories", a web of interwoven 'awakenings', one inside or beside another.

The anonymity embedded within the issue Merleau-Ponty refers, presents a state, merely thought to be such, rooted in the imagined nature of "When one reads these strange pages of one

<sup>2</sup> There is a 'language' [langagière] meaning of language which affects the mediation between my as yet unspeaking intention and words, and in such a way that my speaking words, surprise me myself and teach me my thought.

<sup>3</sup> Every perception has something 'anonymous' about it.

long gone one feels that one is *at one* with one who once..." (40), as if lived and not lived with that one. "Lui, c'est moi" <sup>i 4</sup> (41).

#### 4. AS IF OF

Thus far, we have been focusing on the existence of the object to be thought, here a past, or seemingly paradoxical, a future experience, in the tradition of Brentano and his Student Alexius Meinong, "that there are two kinds of objects: those that exist and those that do not exist" (Craig Husserl), but Husserl solved Brentano's objection, "that, like Kant he could not make sense of existence as a property that some objects have and others lack". Husserl's divergence from Brentano, created a new discipline called phenomenology.

His solution was to accomplish the "of". Consciousness is always consciousness *of* something, or better, consciousness is always *as if of* an object. What matters is not whether or not there is an object, but the features *are of consciousness that makes it always be* "as if of" an object. These three words, "as if of" are the key to Husserl's notion of intentionality.

Similarly, Heidegger writes:

When we have to do with anything, the mere seeing of the Things which are closest to us bears in itself the structure of interpretation, and in so primordial a manner that just to grasp something free, as it were, of the "as", requires a certain readjustment. When we merely stare at something, our just-having-it-before-us lies before us as a failure to understand it any more. This grasping which is free of the 'as', is a privation of the kind of seeing in which one merely understands. It is not more primordial than that kind of seeing, but is derived from it (Heidegger Being 140).

The kind of temporality believed by Ricoeur to be also primordial towards the concept of time, and its direct impact on the literary criticism of fictional narrative, is in total accordance with Heidegger (Moslemi Exordium 49).

#### 5. "NATÜRLICHE EINSTELLUNG" AND/OR NATÜRLICH

The "unnamed as Husserl insists on by full explanation in terms of 'passive intentionality', does not mean that the object does not exist, but the point is that "we structure what we see, and we can do so in different ways. The impulses that reach us from the outside are insufficient to determine uniquely which object we experience; something more, gets added" (Craig Husserl). Joyce's fine rendering of the changing shape of a cloud, Polonius to Hamlet (Hamlet 3.2.399), as Abrams puts it, "the Protean theme of constant change, of ebb and flow, and of metempsychosis" (Abrams 2410), added to "a parody of an elegant, condescending modern essay on Pico", creates Jastrow and Wittgenstein's duck/rabbit picture to get closer to what Husserl meant; as Joyce writes "Pico della Mirandola like. Ay, very like a whale" (40). As if Descartes uses his methodological doubt to save him, Husserl employs *epoche* to be 'out of' this "terribilia meditantis" (45) <sup>5</sup>, therefore, we have to be detached or separated from "medieval abstrusities" (45), to avoid sinking, forget about the ontology for a moment, and put "*natürliche Einstellung*"<sup>6</sup> (Husserl Philosophie 422) in bracket: "Would you do what he did? A boat would be near, a lifebuoy. *Natürlich* <sup>7 ii</sup>, put there for you. Would you or would you not" (45)?

The way by which consciousness grasps its object, for Husserl, is "constitutive", which means that the standing out to consciousness, which as the final step, is itself a unity of the

<sup>4</sup> He is me.

<sup>5</sup> Mediating terrible things.

<sup>6</sup> natural attitude

<sup>7</sup> Naturally.

previously grasped sense-data (hyletic data), not simply there, or simply existing outside, but the act of grasping itself, when done intentionally, is cast away from the grasped object, resulting the technical use of a couple of key terms; the former as 'noesis' and the latter as 'noema' (Husserl Logical). What is named *interpretive* is actually *the mode and manner* of the 'noetic grasping',

*In any act some mode of heedfulness dominates. But whenever the act is not simply consciousness of a thing, whenever there is founded on such a consciousness a further consciousness in which "a position is taken" with respect to the thing, then thing and full intentional object separately arise.*

Thus,

In the act of valuing, we are turned to the valued; in the act of gladness, to the gladsome, in the act of loving, to the loved... the intentional Object, the valuable as valuable, the gladsome as gladsome, the loved as loved, the hoped as hoped ... becomes an object seized upon only in a particular "*objectifying*" turn. Being turned valuing to a thing involves, to be sure, a seizing upon the mere thing; not, however, the mere thing, but rather the valuable thing or the value is the full intentional correlate of the valuing act (Husserl Ideas 76-7).

## 6. CHIPPENDALE CHAIR

Since the "connection between literary evolution and social change does not vanish from the face of the earth, through its mere negation" (Jauss 9), a process of slow change and development, is traced back to paraphrase "nowhere to put it" (39), ranging from an anecdote of a little girl, who at an examination of a school, and to spell the world "chaos", and upon being asked to define, what chaos was, replied, "a great heap of nothing, and nowhere to put it", to a taxi driver, a member of Parliament, Mr. Griffith, Father Tom, the queen and Sir James Parke Lord Wensleydale, Societal questions, cycling stories, [Herbert] Campbell, a private in a Highland regiment (Simpson 2), we find out that John Simpson is carrying a handful of references varying from Bristol Mercury in 1851, Leicester Chronicle Supplement in 1985 and a handful of others, all authentically reviewed during more than a century and a half, until London Journal in 1904<sup>iii</sup>, to exemplify the rest of Hans Robert Jauss' statement that "the new literary work, is received and judged, against the background of the everyday experience of life" (Jauss 17).

Putting together all the references Simpson has gathered, shows that Joyce is not just alluding to a favorite punch-line for jokes, but as mentioned before, as in the case of an allusion used by the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Joyce is 'awakening' by the help of "natürliche Einstellung", an object, here a chair to sit on, which finally finds its reference as a *chippendale* one. The nature of the interest awakened in the reader by the author is open to an interpretation.

—Uncle Richie, really...

—Sit down or by the law Harry I'll knock you down.

Walter squints vainly for a chair.

—He has nothing to sit down on, sir.

—He has nowhere to put it, you mug. Bring in our *Chippendale* chair (39).

No one has been able to interpret Joyce better than himself. As "a slave to the common-sense narrative" (Genis 33), he dares to review the past, hammer all rough points away from the narrative, thus, leave the reader awakened on time.

All opinions, justified or unjustified, popular, superstitious, scientific, all relate to the already pre-given world... all theory relates to this immediate givenness and can have a legitimate sense only when it forms through which do not offend against the general sense of the immediately given. No theorizing may offend against this sense (Husserl qtd. in Craig 425).

Chippendale chair stands for a history full of pretension and its pretenders. It's the chair that, The Bruce's brother, Thomas Fitzgerald, silken knight, Perkin Warbeck, York's false scion, in breeches of silk of whiterose ivory, wonder of a day, and Lambert Simnel, with a tail of nans and sutlers, a scullion crowned. All kings' sons. Paradise of pretenders then and now (45),

rested on, all asserting a right or title, "by the law" (39), to take a position which they do not own and deserve to own, to hide behind the decorations and traditions and all the pretentious furniture fashionable in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, named after the English cabinet maker, Thomas Chippendale, associated with a situation for the "Pretenders,: [to] live their lives" (45). Deep down into the *passivity* of the living in the future, in the past, through a narrative-mediation-mimesis, as if the more Stephen is staying at his aunt's, the more loss is going to be brought about, more traumatic than the whole pretenders in England's history, he vivifies the narration by constituting the scene, the words, the process itself, while still keeping its own noetic identity away from noema addressed in particular, the distance and difference between the realms of speech, signification and culture rooted within the passivity of the other pre-linguistic realm, as Ricoeur puts it, "passivity becomes the attestation of otherness" (Ricoeur Symbolism 318). What is concerned by Stephen is the *chaos* defined by the girl, on the surface of the first digging, within the residue, and when it comes to the phenomenological level, whatever circles around the word 'chaos', connotations, denotations, direct or indirect, active or passive find their chance to be surveyed in turn, in their true hermeneutical discipline. With a gesture of Heidegger, Ricoeur writes

concern has other traits that are more deeply ... hidden, the plane on which we are placing ourselves in this initial phase of investigation is precisely the one on which ordinary language truly is, what J.L. Austin and others have said it is, namely a treasure-house of expressions appropriate to what is specifically human in experience. It is therefore language, with its store-house of meanings that keep the description of concern, in the modality of pre occupation or circumspection, from slipping back into the description of our concern and from remaining tied to the sphere of *vorhanden* ('subsisting things which our concern counts on') and *zuhanden* ('utensils offered to our manipulation') (Ricoeur "Narrative" 3).

The plane Ricoeur theorizes as the initial phase of investigation is in the proximity of the very philosophic (in)felicity, Austin evolves adroitly epistemologic to be counted as a philosophic core (Moslemi Philosophic 17).

## 7. CONCLUSION

Chippendale chair, apart from its being metaphoric, metonymically speaking, through its associations within its metanarrative discourse, "seeks the abolition of the reference by means of self-destruction of the meaning of metaphorical statement", writes Ricoeur, which at least draws "a new systematic pertinence out of the ruins of literal meaning", therefore, "sustains a new referential design" (Ricoeur "Metaphor" 230), so since "*La structure de l'œuvre du maître impliquait qu'il n'y eût pas d'orthodoxie husserlienne*"<sup>8</sup> (Ricoeur "A L'école" 182), we shall still seek for a Husserlian phenomenology. Stephen's narrative serve as a representation, but the scene which he sets, the dialogue which he gives, is an objectification, so Husserliantly speaking, "sedimented in the accomplishments of original passivity (Husserl Crisis 75), passive intentionality is perhaps the key to link "chippendale chair" to Stephen's "nightmare".

<sup>i</sup> A parody of Louis XIV's remark, "L'état, C'est Moi" ("I am the state").

<sup>ii</sup> Abrams' goes for, "Of course!" (2420).

<sup>iii</sup> John Simpson's references:

<sup>8</sup> The structure of the master's work meant that there was not a Husserlian orthodoxy.

- Bristol Mercury (1851), 10 May p. 4. The joke is repeated, as in the magazine Boys of England (1882), 29 December p. 256: "Fun [...] No dictionary can equal the child's definition of chaos. "It is a great pile of nothing," she said, "and nowhere to put it."
- Leicester Chronicle Supplement (1985), 5 December p. 1. Repeated (for example) in the comic magazine Fun (1900) 25 December p. 207: "Cabby. – "Hev a cab, sir?" Passenger. – "Awfully good of you, old man; But I've really nowhere to put it." Cabby growls unprintably, and the episode is closed.
- Pall Mall Gazette (1866), 11 April p. 11.
- Speaker (1893), 11 February p. 153.
- Fortnightly Review (1898), July p. 125. The Review is here paraphrasing a passage from Sir [Sir] Henry Taylor's Autobiography (London: Chapman, Green & Co., 1885), vol. 2 ch. 20 p. 272.
- Hampshire Telegraph (1895), 13 July Supplement p. 11.
- Fun (1897), 6 July p. 3.
- Horse and Hound (1898), 1 January p. 3.
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